



When you fertilize your lawn improperly, our water is affected

How does fertilizing my lawn cause pollution?

- *Improperly* fertilizing a lawn by using too much product or fertilizing too often contributes to water pollution.
- Phosphorous in fertilizers causes algae to grow, which competes for oxygen that fish and other biotic life need.
- If you apply fertilizer just before a rainstorm, much of it will be washed into the storm sewers and from there to the nearest stream, river or lake.
- If you allow fertilizer to sit on the sidewalk or paved driveway/street, you might as well dump it directly in the nearest creek, stream or river. That's where it's going to end up.

What is the problem?

- The current No. 1 water pollution problem comes from nonpoint source pollution.
- Nonpoint source pollution means the pollutants come from several sources instead of one discharge point.
- Nonpoint pollution occurs away from waterways, so many people do not realize they are contributing to water pollution.
 - Property owners do not follow directions and put too much fertilizer on their lawns.
 - Cars leak fluids such as oil or antifreeze on the pavement.
 - People wash their cars in their driveways or on the streets.
 - Pet owners do not pick up and properly dispose of their pets' waste.
 - The rainwater will wash the pollutants into storm sewers.
 - The pollution will be carried – untreated – to the nearest body of water.

What can I do?

- Use fertilizers sparingly.
 - Lawns and many plants do not need as much fertilizer or need it as often as you might think.
 - Test your soil to be sure what it needs.
 - Consider using organic fertilizers, which release nutrients more slowly.
- Don't fertilize before a rainstorm.
- Use commercially available compost, or make your own using garden/yard waste.
 - Mixing compost with your soil means your plants will need less chemical fertilizer and puts your waste to good use.
 - Commercial compost and soil amendments may be available from your local Solid Waste Management District or wastewater utility, as well as your local garden store.
- Don't bag the grass! Use a mulching lawn mower to cut one-third of the blade length each week and naturally fertilize your lawn with grass clippings.
- Wash your spreader and equipment on a pervious or penetrable vegetated area like the lawn, not on the driveway. This allows for the natural absorption of excess fertilizer.
- Maintain a buffer strip of unmowed natural vegetation, such as wildflowers and native grasses, bordering watercourses and ponds. This traps the runoff of excess fertilizers and sediment from lawns/gardens.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management at (317) 232-8172. For a list of Indiana's Solid Waste Management Districts, visit <http://www.state.in.us/idem/oppta/recycling/swmd/contact.pdf>. For information on fertilizing alternatives and composting, call your local Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service. Local phone numbers may be found at www.ces.purdue.edu/counties/html.